

OUR STORY TOO - LESSON 11

- (A) Her Story, Chapter 7, pages 107-116
"Nineteenth Century Preachers and Scholars"
- (1) The Second Great Awakening in the first half of the 1800's attracted large numbers of young women. It is estimated that 2/3 of the new converts were women under thirty.

Probable reasons for this large percentage of women were:

- (2)
- (a) Women responding to the strong cultural message that they are by nature more religious than men and have special religious duties.
 - (b) Women feeling little control over their financial and future marital life turning to God as one who would control their destinies and fortunes.
 - (c) Women preparing themselves for marriage, which required submission and abandonment of frivolous youth.

- (2) Some of the primary roles exercised by women in 19th century revivals were:

- (2)
- (a) In the role of mother, women acted as powerful agents of salvation for their sons and daughters.
 - (b) In letter writing, women wrote to convert their friends and encourage new Christians.
 - (c) In holding prayer meetings, women petitioned God for the blessing of conversions.
 - (d) In counseling other women who were moved to repentance by the revival preachers.

- (1)
- (3) Two male evangelical leaders who encouraged women in public speaking/testifying/preaching were Charles Finney, an evangelist and later President of Oberlin College, and Luther Lee, the founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

- (1)
- (4) As Holiness denominations emerged, women exercised a major role as members and ministers. One of these denominations, namely, the Church of the Nazarene, guaranteed women the right to preach in its constitution of 1894. The founder of another Holiness denomination, namely the Pilgrim Holiness Church, claimed that "no Church that is acquainted with the Holy Ghost will object to the public ministry of women."

- (5) The evangelical movement in which women were most active was the Holiness movement. Match one of these Holiness preachers/speakers with each description below:

- (a) Phoebe Palmer
- (b) Catherine Booth
- (c) Frances Willard
- (d) Amanda Berry Smith

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(5) (cont'd)

c The president of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union, she lectured on women's suffrage as well as temperance because she believed women need the vote to protect the home.

b In her publication "Female Ministry", she used Biblical examples to argue for women preachers.

d A black woman who was a house servant and washerwoman, she became a prominent preacher.

a A major force behind the Holiness movement, she traveled as an evangelist throughout the U.S., Great Britain, and Canada.

a Under her influence, three of the other women listed here answered their calls to ministry.

d She carried out an active preaching ministry which extended to England, India, and West Africa, even though she met much opposition due to her gender and race.

c She complained about the use of "sexist language" in the churches, such as using the words "men" and "brethren" when women were present.

b An outstanding revival preacher, she established with her husband the Salvation Army.

(6) In 19th century evangelical Christianity there were three major arguments for allowing women to preach. Summarize each in a few sentences.

(a) The Holy Spirit argument:

Churches could not prohibit what women felt called by the Holy Spirit to do. Women who did not obey the directions of the Spirit, out of a fear of men, were said to be troubled in their souls and even subject to "fits and seizures".

(b) The practical argument:

Women were needed in new roles to extend the work of the church. Immigration, urban expansion, and the growth of science all presented challenges to American Christians. Many people felt that the churches could not afford to overlook the skills and energies of women, especially since they had a proven record in existing efforts to spread the gospel and reform society.

(c) The Biblical argument:

Many claimed that the NT words commanding women to keep silent were written for a particular time and place and were not meant to apply for all circumstance. Instead, Galatians 3:28 was meant to be the guidepost for all Christians when it comes to the status of women. Others pointed to the active preaching ministries of several women in the Bible and to the events of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on women as well as men.

(7) Opponents of women preachers in 19th century evangelical Christianity objected on the basis of how they interpreted the Bible, how they viewed true womanhood, and because of some practical concerns.

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- (8) Closely related with the issue of women preaching was the issue of whether women should be ordained.

What was/is the general understanding of ordination in most Christian traditions?

Ordination is understood as the setting apart of certain individuals to hold special authority within the congregation, usually authority to preach, administer the sacraments, and supervise the affairs of the congregation.

Two church groups that have no sacramental ministry began to ordain women in the 1800's, namely the Unitarians and the Universalists.

Church denominations with a sacramental ministry that did ordain women in the 1800's were the Congregationalists, the Methodist Protestant Church, and the Wesleyan Methodists. The first such woman ordained was named Antoinette Brown, and she was ordained in the year 1853.

- (9) What two theological schools admitted women in the 1800's?

Oberlin and Boston University

- (10) Several Protestant denominations that did not ordain women opened up professional church work to women in the 1800's through the office/position of deaconess. This position first appeared in the U.S. in the year 1849, inspired by a community of such women in the country of Germany. This position did not become widespread in the U.S. until after the Civil War.

Women who volunteered for this position were set apart by prayer and training for work as nurses, social workers, and missionaries.

- (11) Women who strove to serve in church ministry always had to fight against the "perverted application of the Scriptures" which restricted and degraded women. In the 1880's several women took up the task of systematically exploring the actual status of women in the Bible. The result was the publication in two parts of The Women's Bible in the years 1895 and 1898.

This publication is a series of commentaries or observations prepared by a committee of women on those parts of the Bible that deal with women.

The principal person behind this publication was named Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

One of the theological assumptions of this publication is that the "Word of God" is present in those parts of the Bible where women are treated with justice & humanity, and that those parts of the Bible where women were degraded and made subordinate do not have this status.



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(11) (cont'd)

The commentaries in this publication bring to attention and celebrate women who asserted their rights & dignity; reinterpret some parts in which the message of female equality was hidden or; and expose those sections that devalued women and question overlooked.

the divine origins of such passages

While the committee that put together this publication did not have the critical tools that Biblical scholars of today have, they anticipated much of what feminist theology and Biblical scholarship have done in the 1970-1980's, namely:

- (a) reinterpreting the tradition
- (b) recognizing the patriarchal context of the Biblical writers
- (c) identifying lost traditions affirming women

(B) Her Story, Chapter 8, pages 117-128
"American Women in Catholicism and Sectarianism"

(1) What two factors in the late 1700's created a new social climate for Roman Catholics in the U.S.A. as the 1800's began?

- ①
- (a) American Catholic and French Catholic support for the American Revolution
 - (b) The new republic's promise of freedom of religion

(2) The nineteenth century was one of rapid expansion (structure and membership) and major challenges for Roman Catholicism in the U.S.A. What three major challenges does MacHaffie point out?

- ① 1/2
- (a) Continued hostility from some American Protestants
 - (b) A need to keep the faith alive on the frontier and in the swelling cities
 - (c) A new culture which sometimes clashed with a religion shaped in medieval Europe

(3) The Victorian "cult of true womanhood" was accepted by most U.S. Catholics as well as Protestants. This was reflected in the following:

- ②
- (a) Catholic women were expected to be submissive and domestic.
 - (b) Catholic opposition to the movement for women's suffrage.
 - (c) Catholic ideas on the education of women.
 - (d) Catholic leaders pressed for higher wages for working men so that it would not be necessary for women to work, and for women who had to work they advocated working conditions that befitted the purity and sensitivity of women.

(4) American Roman Catholicism did not entirely subscribe to the "cult of true womanhood", however. Alongside the morally pure figure of the Virgin Mary was the more negative figure of Eve, the archetypal woman who sins and seduces (was the temptress).

①

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(5) Women as members of religious orders first came to North America in the early 1600's as a part of European efforts to colonize and Christianize North America. These first Catholic sisters in North America worked in French and Spanish territories. Their work consisted of missionary outreach to Native Americans and involvement in education and nursing.

(6) During the 1800's Catholic sisters throughout the U.S.A. founded and ran a multitude of social services in frontier settlements and growing cities that had no organized social services. These social services included homes for unwed mothers and delinquent girls, care for the aged and mentally ill, and day-care centers.

(7) The two primary services provided by Catholic sisters in the U.S.A. in the 1800's were teaching school and nursing the sick. These two activities became hallmarks (or distinguishing characteristics) of Catholic concern for others and vehicles for better relationships between Protestant and Catholic Americans.

Through contact with the women who provided these services, a large segment of the U.S. population began to see the Roman Catholic faith in a more favorable light.

(8) The three ways that Catholic sisters helped the Roman Catholic Church meet the challenge of building a strong church in the U.S.A. were:

(a) teaching doctrine to children.

(b) making Catholicism more acceptable and respected by Protestants through their courageous nursing work, especially during times of war and epidemic.

(c) making the Roman Catholic Church realize that its structures had to adapt to new cultural conditions.

(9) Some of the benefits that religious orders offered to Catholic women in the U.S.A. were:

(a) They were able to own property and hold executive positions.

(b) They were often encouraged to acquire an advanced education.

(c) They enjoyed the support of other women.

(d) They were frequently treated by the bishops and priests with whom they worked as friends and colleagues.

(e) They undertook work that was meaningful and useful, and they were urged to cultivate every personal gift for God's honor and glory.

(f) They were engaged in a viable and attractive alternative to marriage and motherhood.

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(10) What is meant by the word "sect" in 19th century American Christianity?

(2) (a) A group that withdrew or broke away from the dominant religious tradition of that period, namely evangelical Protestant Christianity

(b) A group founded and led by a dominant, charismatic personality who wielded power and was regarded as divinely inspired by God.

(11) Some of the reasons why sectarian groups flourished in the U.S. in the 1800's were:

(2) (a) the atmosphere of revival excitement

(b) alienation of those who could not conform to the economic and social demands of American culture.

(c) A sense that U.S. churches had compromised too much with the world and Satan and had forsaken the true faith.

(12) Some of the beliefs of 19th century sectarian groups were:

(2) (a) Christians, through the blessings of the Holy Spirit, could live a perfect or "sanctified" life free from all intentional sin

(b) a stress on the second coming of Christ Jesus

(c) God continuing to reveal new spiritual truth to believers, which necessitated a reinterpretation of the Bible

(13) In several of the 19th century sectarian groups, women exercised a special role. MacHaffie presents five of these groups:

(1) the Shakers, the Oneida Community, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Christian Science and the Spiritualists.

(14) By whom were the Shakers founded? Ann Lee

(1) When? toward the end of the 1700's

Where were they located in the U.S.? in communes from Maine to Kentucky

(15) How did the Shaker belief in the androgynous nature of God shape their theology and community structure? Explain in a one-paragraph essay.

(2) The Shaker belief in the androgynous nature of God was a keystone in the life of their community. They built into their theology and group structures an equal role for women. Just as God the Father had come to earth in the form of Jesus, so God the Mother came in the person of Ann Lee, the Second Messiah. With the coming of the female Messiah, the original equality that woman had with man was restored. The Shaker Ministry which presided over the community was made up of two women and two men. An equal number of Elders and Eldresses supervised the spiritual life of the Shaker families (30 to 90 people), while Deacons and Deaconesses attended to the practical details of communal life.

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- (16) In an essay of two paragraphs, explain how the Shakers dramatically altered the Victorian picture of the ideal woman. Include organization of community life, views on sexuality and relationships, role and work of women.

3 The Shakers altered the Victorian picture of the ideal woman as wife, mother, and keeper of the hearth. The family was seen as a stumbling block to these groups since it diverted the attention and efforts of women and men away from the good of the community. Even before the Shakers were organized into communes, they had adopted a life of celibacy. Ann Lee claimed that she had received a vision from Jesus that the original sin of Adam and Eve was sexual intercourse to satisfy their animal lusts. The perfect or sinless life therefor was a life without sexual desire or sexual relations. The Shaker community included both men and women, but celibacy was strictly enforced through indoctrination and careful regulation of day-to-day activities. Men and women ate at separate tables, worked separately, used separate stairs into their living quarters, and sat on opposite sides of the room for worship.

The communities were self-sufficient, producing the products and food necessary for daily life. Women had useful and productive work to fill their days. Women generally did the indoor work and men did the heavier outdoor tasks but there was no indication that one type of work was superior to the other. There is also evidence that the men carded wool and picked fruit, duties normally assigned to women. Child rearing was a shared responsibility. Orphans and children of new converts were cared for by a group of adults.

- (17) By whom was the Oneida Community led? John Humphrey Noyes

Where were they located? Oneida, New York

2 The belief of the founder about his community was that Oneida represented God's kingdom on earth where selfishness, sexual inequality, tiresome labor, and death itself would be overcome.

- (18) What was the solution of the Oneida Community to "the problem of the traditional family"? In an essay of two paragraphs explain Oneida's views of sexuality, relationships, role and work of women.

3 Noyes rejected celibacy and instead proposed a system of "complex marriage" in which every man in the community was married to every woman and vice versa. Noyes claimed that sexual relations were a gift from God which would not disappear in the kingdom but rather would be extended to include all the saints instead of just one husband given to one wife. The leaders of the community regulated the frequency of sexual liaisons between men and women, insisting that they did not condone "free love" and also making sure that no permanent attachments developed. Women, however, were encouraged to take the initiative in beginning relationships, and Noyes expressed particular concern that they be sexually satisfied by their partners. To reduce the chances of pregnancy, he taught a method of birth control in which the male partner could, through discipline, eliminate the ejaculation of sperm during sexual intercourse.

The residents of Oneida also challenged the idea of male and female occupational "spheres". The community was self-sufficient, producing its own products and food for daily life. Men and women freely intermingled, with women farming alongside men, and men learning to sew. Women were encouraged to drive the team of horses and work in the machine shops. Child rearing was a shared responsibility. The community discouraged the formation of bonds between mothers and children and relegated their care to men and women of the community in a special wing of the house.

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(19) Who was the founder of Christian Science? Mary Baker Eddy

She was the author of the book Science and Health. Her beliefs that launched this new church were:

- (a) The material world, including pain and disease, was illusory.
- (b) The only reality is God and the human reflection of the divine in
- (c) A person could be trained to live on that level of reality only.

(20) What was the role of women in the early development of Christian Science?

- (a) The founder sent women throughout the U.S. to communicate her message
- (b) A woman named Augusta Stetson was responsible for establishing the prestigious First Church of Christ, Scientist in New York
- (c) Women were employed in the movement as practitioners of healing.
- (d) The ritual of worship in Christian Science churches was led by a male and a female reader from the congregation.
- (e) For every man who joined a Christian Science church, 3 women joined.
- (f) Women outnumbered men 6 to 1 as practitioners of healing.

(21) In a one-paragraph essay explain Mary Baker Eddy's androgynous views of God and what this meant for human beings.

Eddy insisted that God had both masculine and feminine dimensions or elements. She emphasized that this did not mean that God had the physical characteristics of male and female, but rather that God included both the masculine attributes of Intelligence and Truth and the feminine quality of Love. In fact, to the created world God was more feminine than masculine, being known primarily through works of love. She encouraged her followers to reflect the divine image by showing both masculine and feminine characteristics.

(22) The beliefs of the Seventh-Day Adventists were shaped by the visions of their founder Ellen Gould White. The founding belief that shaped this church was that Jesus would come again if worship was conducted on the Jewish Sabbath. The founder also guided her followers in matters of health care, diet, and dress.

(23) Another sectarian group that flourished in the 1800's was the Spiritualists. Their distinctive beliefs were:

- (a) The reality of life after death.
- (b) The ability of the living to communicate with the dead through professional mediums

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(24) According to Spiritualist understanding, what was it about women that made them more suitable than men to serve as mediums?
the feminine traits of passiveness, strong feelings, and weak reason

(25) How did serving as a Spiritualist medium help some women to deal with their discontent, according to MacHaffie? Explain in a one-paragraph essay.

In a state of trance and under the control of the spirit world, women who were mediums sometimes assumed masculine roles such as swearing sailors or brilliant scholars that were denied them in real life. They won attention and public acclaim for themselves as well, generally without the condemnation that they were going beyond their sphere since they were not responsible for what was happening.

(26) A disproportionate percentage of women joined the 19th century sects in the U.S. MacHaffie suggests that women may have been attracted to the sectarian communities for reasons directly related to their status in church and society.

(a) Their intense religious feelings & yearnings were satisfied.

(b) They found a much-needed sense of sisterhood with other women.

(c) They found an assurance that should death strike, their children would be cared for and the family unit not broken up.

(d) Those who were widowed or single found economic security.

(e) They may have been rebelling against their status in the Protestant churches and in American culture.

(f) They may have been attracted to rituals that included women symbols that appreciated the feminine, and styles of living in which they could break the bonds of woman's traditional sphere.

(C) Her Story, Chapter 9, pages 129-137
"The Move Toward Full Participation"

(1) The First World War was a watershed for women in the Christian community. Besides the obvious enhancement of the status of women due to their employment, fund raising, and nursing activities during the war, other factors also forced churches to discuss at a more mature level the full participation of women.

In the year 19²⁰, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified. This amendment gave women the right to vote.

In the decades that followed, American Christians became aware of a new Biblical approach that had originated in Germany. In regard to women, this new critical approach to the Bible emphasized the historical circumstances out of which the NT restrictions on and questioned their appropriateness for the 20th century { women grew

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- (2) In the first part of the 20th century, women began to assert themselves in more visible ways in the mainline Protestant denominations in the U.S. One of the first rights asserted was addressing a "mixed" or male audience at a national gathering or convention of a denomination. The first women to do this did so in their capacity as representatives of women's missionary work.

These speaking privileges were soon accompanied by election or appointment of women to lay offices.

A woman was elected President of the denomination called the Northern Baptist Convention in 1921.

- (3) The Protestant denominations that ordained women in the first part of the 20th century were primarily the ones that had started to do so in the prior century, namely:

- (a) Congregational Churches
- (b) Disciples of Christ
- (c) Cumberland Presbyterian Church
- (d) Unitarians
- (e) Universalists

Two larger denominations began to take significant steps toward full clerical rights for women, namely the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

- (4) Along with these early 20th century advances toward the full participation of women in the Christian community were signs of male retrenchment and resistance.

- (a) The upgrading of the Episcopalian office of deaconess in 1920 was reversed in 1930.

- (b) The merger of women's mission boards with denominational boards.

- (c) The closing of women's missionary training colleges or their absorption into theological seminaries.

- (5) In a one-paragraph essay explain how the relative freedom of Roman Catholic nuns was curtailed in the early 1900's.

The relative freedom enjoyed by many American nuns in the 19th century to adapt their life styles to the needs of the American environment was curtailed. Church authorities demanded that the rules governing each community be applied rigorously to the details of everyday life. Nuns were carefully cloistered and their conformity to the rules was closely monitored. They were removed from the care of babies and maternity cases in hospitals and forbidden to teach in coeducational schools. They were especially warned not to form "particular friendships" with men in the church.

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- (6) In a one-paragraph essay explain why the freedom that women had found in Holiness groups was curtailed in the early 1900's.

2 This was partly caused by the influence of fundamentalism which focused on a literal reading of the Bible. The Holiness groups also tried to conform more closely to the practices of the mainline denominations and American culture in general. Their desire to be acceptable and to flourish led them to discourage women preachers and to establish theological seminaries for the creation of a professional ministry. These trends greatly reduced the number of women ministers in the Holiness churches.

- (7) There was little progress during the 1930's in the advancement of women in the Christian community and in the wider society. One reason for this stagnation was the virtual disappearance of an active feminist movement in the U.S. In one paragraph explain this disappearance.

2 The suffrage movement was successful because of the support of large numbers of women who continued to accept the Victorian ideal of true womanhood. They regarded the ballot as a way to extend their maternal and moral influence, and once that goal was reached, they retreated to kitchen and nursery. They had little interest in economic issues or in the acquisition of equality for women in the workplace.

The other reason for the stagnation was the economic conditions of this decade. Why would the Depression inhibit advancement for women?

When so many men were competing for jobs, few churches were inclined to hire women for any kind of position.

- (8) World War II in the 1940's advanced the status of women in much the same way that World War I did, only in even more dramatic ways. With the shortage of available men, women did many kinds of jobs looked upon previously as male domains both in general society and in Christian churches. This even led to the ordination of a woman named Li Tin Oi to the Anglican priesthood in Hong Kong.

- 1 (9) Following World War II, some U.S. church leaders became more open to women doing professional church work because of the need for clergy and trained lay professionals during a period of growth in church membership and building. Denominations in the U.S. and elsewhere were also encouraged to further consider the status of women in their midst by the newly formed organization, the World Council of Churches.

- (10) In the post World War II period, some Protestant denominations began ordaining women for the first time, including:

- 1 (a) the black church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1948.
(b) the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1956.
(c) the new merged church, the United Methodist Church, in 1956.

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- (11) Several denominations created lay professional positions in which women could serve. In a one-paragraph essay explain why these positions proved unsatisfactory.

2 In many cases these professional positions offered very little to women who were seeking equality and full participation in the Christian community. The salaries were usually less than half of what ordained men received, and worker benefits were often nonexistent. Women in such posts were frequently the last hired and first fired on a church staff. They had poorly defined relationships with the decision-making bodies of their denominations. They were considered church professionals yet they had no vote in running the institutions they served. Finally, they often found their tasks frustrating. Women frequently became the "errand girls" of the ordained staff, burdened with the mundane and detailed work that others did not want to do.

- (12) The 1960's forced U.S. churches to look again at its female members.

- 2
- (a) The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex as well as race.
 - (b) A Presidential Commission found that women were second-class citizens in almost every area of U.S. life.
 - (c) The publishing of several books that voiced the frustration and rage of women.
 - (d) The launching of a movement of radical organized feminism.

- (13) Some of the important vehicles in the last few decades for consciousness-raising for women and men in U.S. denominations have been:

- 1
- (a) denominational reports and special studies
 - (b) a vast body of literature on sexism in the churches
 - (c) formal and informal group gatherings of women

- (14) In a one-paragraph essay explain the consciousness-raising that is happening among many black women as to their historic role and why they have been excluded from leadership roles in black churches.

2 As black women began to examine their status in the Christian communities, they realized that for centuries they have operated as the "glue" that held the black community together, reflecting their African heritage of economic and religious importance. In the face of profound oppression, they cared about preserving and continuing prayer, education, family life, and the programs of the churches. Yet they realized that they had been systematically excluded from positions of authority and leadership. The black church has been "super-patriarchal" because only in the church did black men find an opportunity for power which was denied them in society at large. Black women also began to resent the fact that their strength was regarded with humiliation by black men and their experiences had been ignored by black theologians.

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- (15) Many Christian women have shifted in the last few decades from "social" feminism to "radical" feminism. Explain in a one-paragraph essay.

2

"Social" feminism is the term used to describe moderate feminism which focuses on one issue such as suffrage but which accepts the ideals of true womanhood. The groups that have sprung up in the last part of the 20th century do not focus on one particular issue but have a broad range of concern; much as the early 19th-century feminists did. Advocacy for a higher percentage of women on church boards and agencies is continued, and women are encouraged to enter the ordained ministry. But they also urge that an end be put to male dominance in the study of the Bible and church history, in theology, and in the liturgies and hymns of worship. They focus attention on ethical issues that concern women and they encourage the critical scrutiny of traditional marriage and family relationships. What also distinguishes radical feminism from more moderate social feminism is a sense of urgency and impatience with compromise.

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- (A) Her Story, Chapter 10, pages 139-155
"Agents of Transformation"

- (1) The continued refusal to ordain women in conservative Protestant denominations such as the Missouri Synod Lutherans and the Southern Baptists is backed up by the way they interpret the Bible. How are women seen according to this interpretation?

According to their interpretation of the Bible, women are to be subservient to men in church and at home as a punishment for bringing sin into the world and as an acknowledgement of their secondary status in order of creation.

- (2) The Roman Catholic organization called St. Joan's International Alliance has been a forum for Catholic women to work toward feminist goals ever since the early 1900's.

- (3) The consideration of women's rights in the Roman Catholic Church has only been considered on a large scale in the past few decades. The leadership of this movement has been primarily nuns, especially those who belong to the national organization in the U.S. called Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

- (4) The official Vatican statement in 1976 on the admission of women to the priesthood did not rely on the traditional arguments that women are inferior to men nor did it resort to ancient fears regarding the uncleanness of women. What then did this Vatican statement claim?

Since the priest was the "image", "sign", and "representation" of Jesus before the people of God, a man would have to fill this role since Jesus was a male.

- (5) Paul Jewett's study of the arguments against the ordination of women in the Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches shows three main points made by the opponents:

- (a) A woman before the altar would distract men from the purpose of worship by arousing sexual feelings in an atmosphere already charged with emotion.
(b) The priestly office is a position of authority and leadership which cannot be granted to women who have been created as inferior to men.
(c) Since God, Jesus, and the twelve apostles were/are "male", women cannot act as God's representatives on earth.

- (6) The 1976 "Consultation on the Role of Orthodox Women in the Church and Society" was held in the country of Romania. The recommendations that this conference made to the Orthodox churches included:

- (a) Women have special feminine gifts which they should be encouraged to use in full partnership with men.
(b) Women should have full access to theological education and, if qualified, be able to teach theology.
(c) The office of deacon should be revived for women, complete with the ancient Eastern tradition of ordination.

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(d) Women should be admitted to the orders of reader and acolyte.

(e) Nuns should be given a voice in decisions affecting their lives.

(7) Two U.S. Lutheran denominations made the decision to ordain women in the year 1970. These denominations were the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church.

(8) The first Episcopalian women to be ordained in the U.S. were ordained in the year 1974 by some sympathetic bishops. Official approval for the admission of women to the priesthood did not come until the year 1976.

(9) By 1981, the U.S. Protestant denomination with the largest number of clergy women was the United Church of Christ. This denomination was a 1950's merger of the Congregational Christian Churches (which had been ordaining women since the 1850's) and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

(10) The resistance ordained women face is not just from traditional interpretations of the Bible. Opposition from male clergy may stem from their fear that pastoral ministry has already become feminized in a highly technical culture _____, and a woman in the pulpit may exacerbate these fears. Male clergy may also view women as competitors in a shrinking job market.

(11) Because there are so few preconceived ideas or stereotypes as to what a woman pastor is like, women in pastoral ministry in the latter part of the 20th century have had the opportunity to do ministry differently. Some of the most visible changes have been in the areas of leadership style and pastoral care. Explain in an essay of two paragraphs.

In leadership style, clergywomen are less inclined to see themselves as authoritarian leaders set apart in status from the lay people. Rather, they tend to see themselves as part of a ministry in which the whole church shares. They are more inclined to use the circle or rainbow as a model for ministry rather than the pyramid. They are also willing to draw out and use the resource of all members of the community, showing special sensitivity to those who have been previously shut out from meaningful participation.

Women are also contributing to a new understanding of pastoral care in the churches. Some clergywomen use the term "midwife" to describe their counseling style. Both men and women appear to regard female pastors as more approachable and less judgmental than male pastors. As a result, church members are more willing to become vulnerable by sharing themselves at a deep level. Some clergy women in turn find that they are skilled at helping others give birth to new talent and dimensions of personality. They also often find that their social conditioning as women makes them attentive listeners, able to step over to the side of another and hear with that person's ears and see with that person's eyes

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(12) Since Vatican II, communities of Roman Catholic nuns have grown smaller and the median age has risen. Some of the reasons are:

- (a) Women who did not wish to become wives and mothers were offered options by secular society _____.
- (b) Women who joined the communities in the 1960's and 1970's were often dissatisfied with the quality of community life _____.
- (c) The traditional tasks of nuns in the U.S. - nursing and education of immigrants - have either become unnecessary or were taken over by lay professionals _____.

(13) In an essay of one paragraph, describe the change in how authority in communities of nuns is handled.

A major change has taken place in how authority is handled in the lives of individual nuns and in the shared life of the community. In the past, the superior of the convent was regarded as the mouthpiece for the will of God. She acted as such by enforcing the community's rule. Now, however, nuns continue to speak of obedience to the will of God but they listen to their own conscience and the voice of God in prayer and the Bible as well as church authorities. They are expected to make their own decisions about life style and to take responsibility for these decisions. Often this means that even within a single community there will be several ways of dressing and many ways of working, including some outside the convent walls. Also, many communities now have no superiors and instead make decisions as a group on issues such as how money will be spent.

(14) Nuns in U.S. religious communities are setting new agendas of concern for themselves, identifying the human needs of today as they did in the 1800's. Three areas in which many now direct their efforts are:

- (a) the peace movement
- (b) the elimination of hunger
- (c) economic justice for the poor and oppressed in U.S. society

(15) Since the middle of the 1970's women have become the fastest growing constituency in accredited theological schools in the U.S. In several of the mainline Protestant seminaries, women make up half or more of the student body.

The four stages in which seminary communities relate to women have been identified as:

- (a) A handful of women enter the school to prepare for full-time work in a church _____.
- (b) A growing number of women on campus sense their marginality both in the seminary and in the churches they are preparing to enter and so they form a group or "caucus" to discuss their experiences and express their anger with their situations. _____.

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(15) (cont'd)

- (c) Women become a significant part of the student body; women are added to the faculty; courses that address women's concerns are added to the curriculum; and an effort is made by faculty and administrators to avoid language that excludes or degrades women.
- (d) Women issue a challenge to seminaries that theological education in both method and content must move beyond the perspective of white middle-class men. The model of theological education proposed has the three characteristics of holistic, integrated, and collaborative.

(16) In the last two decades, the worship and preaching of many Christian churches in the U.S. (and elsewhere) have dramatically changed due to the concern of women over language, specifically language used for God and language used for the people of God.

② One of the most controversial efforts toward the use of inclusive language in churches has been the publication of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. called The Inclusive Language Lectionary.

(17) Why, according to many Christian feminists, does Christian theology have to be reformulated? Explain in an essay of one paragraph.

② Theology grows out of the experiences of a community of people with God. Yet many women have pointed out that Christian theology reflects the experiences of only one-half of the community, since it has been written and interpreted by men. It is expressed in the language and mental categories of men. As a result, it simply is not adequate for the needs and questions of women who are moving toward equality in the Christian community.

(18) Feminist theologians have pointed out that two particular views of reality in traditional Christian theology must be changed, namely the dualistic view and the hierarchical view.

①

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- (19) There are wide differences between feminist theologians and scholars, ranging from "revolutionary" to "reformist" approaches. Match each description below with one of these feminist scholars (or pair of scholars):

(a) Mary Daly (b) Rosemary Radford Ruether
(c) Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Letty Russell

- c She/They believe it is necessary to liberate traditional Christianity from its sexism, and that this is possible.
- b Advocate of the position that the traditional Biblical canon is so thoroughly sexist that women must move beyond it in order to construct a meaningful theology.
- a Representative of the view that Christianity itself is thoroughly and hopelessly sexist and only serves the interests of a society or institution that oppresses women.
- c Representative of the reformist view, she/they have made a start at reinterpreting some of the stories, concepts, and images which form the core of the Christian faith.
- b She/They propose a new canon consisting of those parts of the Bible that present female power and affirmation and also of some texts from marginal, unorthodox Christian communities which reflect the experience and critical dialogue of women.
- a She/They have proposed that God no longer be thought of as a noun but as a verb.
- c Using liberation theology as a guide, she/they believe that the Christian tradition can be reformed and reinterpreted so that it can be claimed by women as well as men.
- a Representative of the view that a whole new religion must be constructed in which women "name" reality for themselves.

- (B) "The Trinity and Women's Experience", an article reprint pages 131-133 of this course manual.

NOTE: Barbara Brown Zikmund is Dean of Pacific School of Religion (Berkeley, California), a seminary which many MCC students have attended. This article, representing a moderate or reformist feminist stance, is an attempt at re-articulating the Christian tradition in terms of women's experience. Specifically, the doctrine of the Trinity is addressed.

- (1) Dr. Brown Zikmund describes the four stages in the evolution of her Christian feminist consciousness:

- (a) Concern about the masculine bias in language referring to human beings.
- (b) Concern about the masculine bias in language about God.

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(1) (cont'd)

(c) Recovery of certain words about God, celebrating the feminine attributes of God as well as the male ones.

(d) Reclaiming the ancient doctrine of the Trinity, with the conviction that this doctrine captures some of the unique message of the gospel and expresses certain understandings of God consistent with women's experience.

(2) On the surface level, the doctrine of the Trinity is unacceptable to many feminists for three reasons. Briefly explain each.

(a) The masculine bias:

The trinitarian formula of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit depicts an old man, a young man, and a dove. Even when it is argued that the Hebrew word for Spirit is feminine, the masculine bias seems overwhelming.

(b) The hierarchial nature of trinitarian theology:

Trinitarian theology is hierarchial in that the Son is said to proceed from the Father. Implying that all of creation is ordered from the top down, such theology can justify oppressive political and social systems.

(c) A violation of monotheism:

When the doctrine seems to call on Christians to worship three gods instead of one, it violates the unity of God.

(3) In examining the doctrine of the Trinity more closely, Dr. Brown Zikmund points out the following:

(a) The affirmation in the Hebrew Scriptures that God is incomparable.

(b) The Christian assertion that in Christ Jesus we have a special revelation about God, that is Christ Jesus has reshaped human knowledge about God.

(c) To express the relationship between Jesus and God, early Christians articulated a trinitarian understanding, which recognized differences in the work of God in history, and also maintained the unity of God.

(d) To articulate the doctrine of the Trinity, early Christians used the Latin word "persona" to say that God is three "persons" in one nature or substance. The word "persona" is derived from the language of the theater and refers to masks worn by actors in their roles on stage. Thus "persons" in trinitarian doctrine does not have modern individualistic connotations, but instead refers to three different characterizations of one dynamic actor.

(e) Another word in the ancient formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity also translated into English as "person" is the Greek word "hypostasis". This word points to the individual existence of a particular nature, and thus expresses the belief that the trinitarian "persons" of God are individual, noninterchangeable subjects of the one common divine substance. The three "persons" are each unique, but they exist as community.

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(3) (cont'd)

(f) Historical theology reflects 2 ways of defining the Trinity: the "economic" understanding and the "immanent" understanding. Which one of these understandings does the author find consistent with women's experience? immanent understanding

(4) Two recent psychological studies by Carol Gilligan and Jean Baker Miller point to what a new psychology of women might entail.

Gilligan contends that women find their identity in relationship. Women's relationships are characterized much more by interconnection (the image of a web) than by the male pattern of hierarchy. For women there is a fusion of identity and the web of intimacy.

Miller points out that while women are certainly acquainted with relationships of dominance and subordination, they also know the positive potential of relationships. Consequently, a psychology of women must build upon the context of attachment which characterizes women's lives and must uphold affiliation above the male ideal of self-enhancement.

(5) Returning to the doctrine of the Trinity, Dr. Brown Zikmund points out that some theologians insist that what is most vital about belief in a triune God is not that we see or know God in three ways (the "economic" understanding), but rather that we understand God as dynamic community (the "immanent" view).

(6) For Dr. Brown Zikmund, there is a special energy within the triune God which expresses the love of God experienced in Jesus Christ. She cites an 8th century theologian who described the exchange of energy between the persons of the Trinity by virtue of their eternal love. The unity of the Trinity then is not static substance or family relationship, but open and loving community. Therefore, when women affirm the importance of relationships in human life, they are showing all Christians what it means to be created in God's image.

(7) In a one-paragraph essay, explain how this understanding of the Trinity erodes the monarchical and patriarchal power of monotheism.

When God is no longer viewed as solitary and stark unity, or absolute unrelated personality, we are able to live with - not just fall down before - our God. Much theology has emphasized the dominance of God and the sinfulness of humanity. But a truly social doctrine of the Trinity contains the vision of a community of women and men in church and society without privilege or subjection to each other - or to God. Trinitarian theology asserts that relationship is fundamental to God and that community is the foundation of God's interaction with the world. Instead of an unmoved mover, God as community calls us to shared responsibility.

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- (8) In a one-page essay, give your response to Dr. Brown Zikmund's reformulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Does it accurately and insightfully describe the triune God? Is it true to women's experience as you have experienced or observed it?

Look for a clear, insightful discussion of Barbara Brown Zikmund's ideas and for a clear explanation of student's personal responses/reactions.

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(C) "Re-contextualizing Theology", *Theology Today*,
April 1986
pages 22-27

NOTE: You may find it helpful to review the paragraph on page 150 of *Her Story* on Rosemary Radford Ruether. This essay by Ruether is not easy reading; you may have to read these six pages a few times to grasp the essence of Ruether's points. Ruether represents a middle ground between feminists who remain squarely within the Christian tradition and those who reject it entirely.

- (1) For the development of a fresh theological perspective among Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians, there is a call to re-contextualize Christianity in an alternative community. In each case, this community was one marginalized and oppressed by the very people who brought the Gospel to them, and it was also a community with distinctive and different cultural traditions from those of Western European Christians.

This kind of re-contextualization in an alternative culture is not possible for women. Explain in an essay of one paragraph how women's culture has been suppressed and all but eliminated.

3 Unlike subordinated races who have preserved some remnants of an alternative culture from a period prior to their enslavement, the subordination of women takes place at the heart of every culture and thus deprives women of an alternative culture with which to express their identity over against the patriarchal culture of family and society. Some cultures give women distinct religious rituals and cults and quasi-autonomous social and economic groupings, providing some basis for a women's culture or "sub-culture". But even these female groupings remain largely invisible to the public culture, defined as male culture. Western Protestant Christian society since the Reformation has largely eliminated separate female religious communities, such as women's religious orders. Female guilds also largely disappeared in early modern Europe. Protestant women reinvented many women's groups in the 1800's, but the price of integration into the dominant church and educational systems has tended in recent times to mean the elimination of these separate women's organizations.

- (2) In ethnic liberation theologies, the Bible is seen as
a positive side of a liberation gospel
that can be used to criticize later church tradition.

2 Ruether maintains, however, that the same Scriptural passages used to justify the subordination of women were also used to justify the maintenance of the master-slave relationship.

She therefore challenges contemporary black American theology to deal with the integral relationship of sexism, paternalism, and slavery within patriarchy.

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- (3) In one paragraph explain why Ruether views the Bible as "a patriarchal document".

② It assumes throughout an androcentric perspective, in which the male is the normative human person and interlocutor (dialogue-partner) with God. And it also explicitly justifies the subordination of women by myths of women's intrinsic inferiority, dependency, and sinfulness.

- (4) In one paragraph explain why women, when using the liberation texts of the Bible, have to do more radical translation and re-contextualization than ethnic groups would.

② The liberation texts that marginalized ethnic and economic groups draw upon as their biblical basis do not address the subordination of women within patriarchy as such, but arise from the consciousness of males within economically and ethnically deprived groups. Thus the application of such texts to the liberation of women involves a more radical translation and re-contextualization where not merely the actors but the sorts of social systems addressed have changed.

- (5) When faced with the androcentricism and misogyny of the Bible, women have to ask themselves whether it is possible to be feminist and Christian. For some the answer is clearly "NO". In one paragraph explain their rationale.

② For such women, it is patently clear that the Bible, and the two major religions that spring from it, have as their essential agenda, the subordination of women. Patriarchal religion is the way that male domination sacralizes itself by making God all the religious symbols of the divine-human relationship into sacred reiterations of the male domination and female subordination.

- (6) Some feminists who thus reject Christianity (#5) seek repressed female-identified religions which pre-date the rise of patriarchy. One place where they look for these pre-patriarchal Goddess religions is in those subcultures on the margins of Christianity where these religions managed to survive, namely in those pagan groups which were villified by the church as "witches".

- (7) Other feminists are not convinced that an alternative Goddess religion can be recovered in this way (#6).

② (a) They find the stories of pre-patriarchal Goddess religion more attractive myth than real history.

(b) What they can recover of the religions of these ancient Goddess-worshippers and of late medieval women condemned by the church does not sound to them much like women's liberation.

(c) They are unwilling to surrender the biblical texts about justice and redemption, however much women may have been ignored in them.

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- (8) Ruether maintains that "given the poverty of the official Christian tradition for symbols and stories affirmative of women", women need not "set any cultural limits to their search for alternative sources for their liberation." For Ruether this includes:

- (a) Biblical texts which have some justice perspective.
- (b) Exploration of margined Christian groups condemned as "heresies", such as gnostics, Montanists, and others who seem to have had female symbols of divinity and gave greater religious authority to women.
- (c) Dialogue with non-biblical religions with female images of the divine and with Goddess religionists today.
- (d) Writing of new stories out of women's religious experience today.

- (9) Given the history of early Christianity and its synthesis of New Testament faith and Greco-Roman culture, Ruether maintains that those who seek a liberation Christianity today must turn around the process by which the Christian church identified itself within an imperial ruling class over slaves, women, and conquered peoples.

This means a creative mix of two agendas: liberation and cultural indigenization.

- (10) To do this creative mix (#9) in feminist terms, Ruether says that what is needed is a blending of biblically-based feminist liberation theology and a feminist spirituality based on a revival of Goddess religion.

The biblical liberation tradition is essential for feminist identity because:

- (a) It critiques all religions that function as the sacral ideology of the ruling classes.
- (b) It proclaims that God's word and will are on the side of the oppressed and despised of history.
- (c) It announces a new social order, a new humanity, a new heaven and earth. God is seen as at work in history to rend and to heal, to put the mighty down from their thrones and to lift up the lowly.

The Goddess religion is important in order to balance the biblical language of conflict with evil with a sense of the harmonious relationships in and among nature, humanity, and the divine. While feminists certainly must struggle against evil and have an ethical language to express both denunciation and hope, they also need foretastes of unalienated life.

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- (11) In an essay of one page, give your response to Dr. Ruether's proposals for feminist spirituality. In your opinion, is the creative mix that she describes what Christian feminists need in order to forge an authentic, empowering spirituality for themselves? Explain your views.

Look for a clear, insightful discussion of Ruether's ideas and for a clear explanation of stance pro or con.

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